

Message Text

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ORIGIN EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NSC-05 SS-15 SSO-00 NSCE-00 CCO-00 /030 R

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S E C R E T STATE 251350 TOSEC 290091

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US

SUBJECT: SITUATION IN THAILAND UPDATE

REF: STATE 25,105

1. THE NATIONAL ADMINISTRATIVE REFORM COUNCIL (NARC) CONTINUES TO SOLIDIFY ITS CONTROL OVER THE GOVERNMENT OF THAILAND. THE NARC HAS EXPANDED FROM 18 TO 24 MEMBERS INCREASING THE PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OF ARMY OFFICERS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WITH DIRECT COMMAND OF TROOPS NEAR BANGKOK. OVERT STUDENT AND LABOR OPPOSITION TO THE NARC IS NON-EXISTENT AS THAI SECURITY FORCES CONTINUE TO SEARCH FOR "COMMUNIST" SUSPECTS, ESPECIALLY FROM AMONG STUDENT ELEMENTS. POLICE, HOWEVER, SEEM ANXIOUS TO RELEASE AS MANY OF THE 3,000 PEOPLE UNDER ARREST AS SOON AS THEY CAN BE SCREENED, DETAINING ONLY THOSE TO BE PROSECUTED FOR SPECIFIC OFFENSES. THE CASUALTY TOTAL FOR THE VIOLENCE OCTOBER 6, WHICH PRECEDED THE COUP D'ETAT, STANDS AT 39 DEAD (INCLUDING TWO POLICEMEN) AND 167 WOUNDED.

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2. OUR EMBASSY IN BANGKOK REPORTS THAT MANY THAI OBSERVERS

FEEL THAT THE MAJORITY OF THAIS SUPPORTED THE MILITARY TAKEOVER, BUT AN OUTRIGHT MILITARY DICTATORSHIP IS STILL

NOT WHAT MOST THAI WANT, AND THE NEW AUTHORITIES WILL HAVE TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF SUCH A REGIME TO RETAIN PUBLIC SUPPORT. APPARENTLY AWARE OF PUBLIC SENTIMENT, NARC CHIEF ADMIRAL SA-NGAT PRESENTED THE NAME OF THE NEW PRIME MINISTER TO THE KING OCTOBER 8 FOR APPOINTMENT. HIS NAME IS THANIN KRAIWICHIAN, A VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN LAWYER AND UNIVERSITY LECTURER WHO HAS BEEN LINKED WITH ULTRA-CONSERVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS IN THAILAND. COMMITTEES OF CIVILIANS HAVE ALSO BEEN APPOINTED TO ASSIST IN THE OPERATION OF VARIOUS MINISTRIES UNTIL A CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT IS FORMED, THE NEW PRIME MINISTER HAS SAID, WITHIN THE NEXT 14 DAYS. THE COMMITTEES INCLUDE SOME WELL-KNOWN FIGURES, E.G. EX-FOREIGN MINISTER THANAT KHOMAN, AND ARE HIGHLY CONSERVATIVE IN COMPOSITION. NEWSPAPERS ARE STILL NOT AVAILABLE, BUT MANY EXPECT TO BE ABLE TO PUBLISH SOON. INDEPENDENT RADIO AND T.V. BROADCASTING HAS RESUMED, PROVIDED THAT ALL PROGRAMS "PROMOTE UNITY, NATIONAL TRADITION AND PUBLIC ORDER". THE KING HAS ALSO FURTHERED THE LEGITIMACY OF THE NARC. ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT MENTION THE NEW AUTHORITY BY NAME DURING A BRIEF RADIO ADDRESS TO THE NATION, THE KING DID USE LANGUAGE CONSISTENT WITH THE NARC'S OWN JUSTIFICATION FOR SEIZING POWER.

3. INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO THE COUP IN THAILAND HAS INCLUDED CHARGES BY BOTH RADIO LAOS AND RADIO HANOI THAT THE U.S. ENGINEERED THE TAKEOVER. IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION, THE DEPARTMENT'S SPOKESMAN REPLIED THAT THE CHARGE WAS RIDICULOUS. ROBINSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TOSEC, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 08 OCT 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: powellba
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976STATE251350
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: RASMITH:MGH
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760380-1246
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19761065/aaaacevr.tel
Line Count: 93
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 25
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: powellba
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 02 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <02 JUN 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <25 OCT 2004 by powellba>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SITUATION IN THAILAND UPDATE
TAGS: PFOR, TH, US, NARC
To: SECRETARY
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006